

THE ROLE OF THE NEGRO
IN AMERICAN HISTORY FROM 1519 TO 1861

by

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B. A., Bethel College, 1962

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1968

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I. INTRODUCTION

There is a certain aspect of the Civil Rights movement which often appears to be buried amidst the picketing, vocal protests, and rioting which accompany the American Negroes' attempts to gain equality in our society. This is the assessment of the Negro American's role in history, and the presentation of that role in the American classroom.

Statement of the Problem

The above-mentioned problem is perhaps most evident in the current controversy in which some of the nation's metropolitan areas are involved regarding the contributions of minorities in American history. The problem has been particularly evident in such areas as Detroit and Los Angeles. Pressure groups, comprised primarily of Negroes, have played a major role in focusing attention on the problem.¹ As a consequence, publishers have been prevailed upon to revise their textbooks as demands for equality have involved an attempt to rid educational materials of prejudice-filled references that are damaging to human relations.²

¹ Lucian Davis, "Current Controversy: Minorities in American History Textbooks," Journal of Secondary Education, XLI (Nov., 1966), 291.

² Ibid., p. 291.

Importance of the Study

The assessment of the American Negro's role in our nation's history is a problem of paramount importance to the educator, whose teaching may have a considerable effect on the attitudes of his students. One authority states that

"there are fewer battlefields for the minds of men, on any front, than in the classroom of social studies teachers where attitudes concerning Negroes and others are being constructed either by positive or negative action."³

The teaching of Negro history in the public schools would, hopefully, help to provide the basis for a climate of racial understanding, and would thus provide a greater opportunity to solve the human relations problems involved.⁴ Since it was through miseducation that racial myths have been propagated, it seems rational to conclude that a greater understanding between the races may emanate from a more objective presentation of Negro history.⁵

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to establish a factual basis for the conclusion that the American Negro has made a worthy

³ Charles H. Wesley, Neglected History, Essays in Negro-American History by a College President (Wilberforce, Ohio: Central State College Press, 1965), p. 35.

⁴ Loren B. Katz, "Some Guidelines in Teaching American Negro History," Negro History Bulletin, XXVIII (May, 1965), 190.

⁵ Ludell W. Neyland, "Negro History, A Basis for the New Freedom," Vital Speeches of the Day, XXXI (Oct. 1, 1965), 768.

contribution to American history by reviewing the period from the discovery of America to the commencement of the Civil War. The historical information thus collected was suggested as a basis for presenting the role of the American Negro in the teaching of American history in the light of the most recent historiographic trends. Since findings presented in the review of the literature indicated that many of the educational materials currently in use were not keeping pace with this changing emphasis, it was concluded that the individual teacher must step beyond the scope of those materials in order that a comprehensive and objective understanding of the issue might be gained.

Procedures of the Study

As the initial step in the research of the topic, several annotated bibliographies prepared on the general subject of the Negro in American history were consulted. From these a list of the most highly recommended works pertaining to the study was compiled, including the writings of both Negro and white historians. An attempt was made to include works which were cited as particularly noteworthy contributions for their own time in the judgment of the annotators, as well as recent works which would represent current historiographical trends. In addition to the general surveys consulted, an attempt was made to include works which presented a more specialized treatment of a specific phase of the topic.

Limitations of the Study

The Civil War and post-Civil War periods of American history were excluded from the scope of the study. Although the consideration of these periods would undoubtedly have proved to be significant, it was deemed necessary to limit the scope of the topic chronologically to permit a more comprehensive treatment of the period chosen for study.

It was concluded that the chronological limitation of the study was offset somewhat by the fact that the institution of slavery existed in America throughout the last two centuries of the period under study. Hence, the American Negro had greater odds and limitations to overcome if he was to play a significant role in the nation's development apart from his obligations as a slave.

Definition of Terms

Negro. The term as used in the study referred to the American Negro.

Role. The meaning of this term was based on the events involving American Negroes, as individuals or as a group, which were regarded as being indicative of their contribution to American development. The "role" of the Negro in American history was comprised of the total aggregate of the events thus chosen as the basis for the study.

In order to determine which events involving Negroes were to be deemed as being indicative of this role, the following criteria were established:

1. The concurrence of the historians whose works were reviewed as to their assessment of the significance of each event or contribution in question, as indicated by their citations of specific events or individuals and the content of such citations. Any such event or contribution in question which was cited by as many as two or more historians was included in the study.

2. The judgment of noteworthy contemporaries of the individual or group whose contribution or influence was in question, whenever such a judgment was available.

3. Whether the specific event or action of an individual or group of Negroes was enacted on the basis of individual initiative or choice. Consequently, any specific events in which Negroes played a part under coercion or by obligation under slavery were categorically excluded.

4. The application of the principle of cause-and-effect to determine, in the judgment of the historians whose works were cited, whether the effect of a certain event in question indicated that it was significant.

High school in this study referred to the senior high school, or the four-year high school.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature revealed that 1) American historians of the past, particularly prior to the past two or three decades, showed little interest in the achievements of

American Negroes; 2) a new historiographical trend is emerging, as the topic of Negro achievements in history is now receiving far more attention among American historians; 3) textbook studies indicate that many American history textbooks used in junior and senior high schools do not reflect the findings of research conducted in the light of the emerging historiographical emphasis.

Neglect of Negro History in the Past

To look more closely at the first of these conclusions, there are various factors which explain why historians tended to neglect the topic in the past.

One factor was that a great majority of historians accepted the assumption that the role of the Negro in American history was not worthy of their consideration. They believed that the Negro was worthy of mention only in a "problem" context or with reference to a subordinate role.⁶ Historians also displayed a tendency to use the materials of history to support their own preconceived notions concerning the inferiority of the Negro.⁷

The following analogy from the pen of historian Edward Hallett Carr states the issue quite succinctly:

⁶ Benjamin Quarles, "What the Historian Owes the Negro," Saturday Review, XLIX (Sept. 3, 1966), 11.

⁷ John Hope Franklin, "The New Negro History," Journal of Negro History, XLII (April, 1957), 91.

When one goes fishing for facts, what he catches depends partly upon chance, but primarily upon other factors, such as the part of the ocean he chooses to fish in, the kind of tackle he selects, and the kind of fish he wants to catch.⁸

The meaning of the analogy is quite clear. The product of a historian's research is likely to be affected by any pre-conceived mind-set or values he may harbor within his thinking.

In addition to those historians who openly denied that the Negro might have played a significant role in American history, there were those who subconsciously neglected that role, due to their ethnocentric attitudes.⁹ Inevitably, since American history was written primarily by men of European stock, the Negro was bound to suffer. Such a historian might well have had no inclination to identify with the Negro; consequently, the role of the Negro was inadvertently neglected. To glorify one's own background in such a culturally diverse society as that characteristic of America would place an even greater problem before the historian, and thus might well have led to a denigration of minority elements in our society.¹⁰

A corresponding aspect of this ethnocentric attitude among historians was also evident in their tendency to be preoccupied with the culture which was and is most dominant. Throughout the span of modern history, European nations have played a

⁸Quarles, loc. cit.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

dominant role in world developments. Thus, it was perhaps somewhat more likely that the historian, and particularly the white Western historian, would have a racialistic and Europocentric view of the modern world. Implied in this assumption was the conclusion that non-Western and non-White cultures were inferior. It would not be difficult to understand the effect of these assumptions on the image of the Negro reflected in such historical writing.¹¹

The Emerging Emphasis

Emphasis on the role of the Negro in history is not an entirely new subject in the writings of Negro historians, since they have been concerned with the presentation of that role ever since they have entered the arena of historical writing. Paul D. W. DuBois, the first Negro to earn a Ph. D. from Harvard University (1894),¹² was concerned with the image of his race which was portrayed in history, as was Carter Woodson, the founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, in 1916.¹³

A more recent development, however, is the tendency of white historians to view the Negro from new and fresh angles. During the past two or three decades, white historians have

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Rayford W. Logan, The Negro in the United States, A Brief History (Princeton: Van Nostrand Co., 1967), p. 55.

¹³ Franklin, op. cit., p. 93.

been stimulated to focus their attention on the history of the Negro in the United States.¹⁴

This new historical emphasis by both white and Negro historians is frequently referred to as the "new Negro history." Its newness, however, is based only on a newness of emphasis, rather than upon the facts of history per se. This is stated in the assertion by John Hope Franklin that

"for the first time in the history of the United States, there is a striking resemblance between what historians are writing and what has actually happened in the history of the American Negro."¹⁵

This new historical emphasis has been defined as "the literary and intellectual movement that seeks to achieve the same justice for the Negro in history that he seeks in other spheres."¹⁶

Textbook Studies

It has long been known that textbook publishers tend to shy away from the publication of controversial issues in their materials¹⁷ in order to appeal to a larger market. With reference to Negro history, it has been suggested that the denigration of the Negro is attributed to the "deference of

¹⁴ Quarles, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁵ Franklin, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁷ Stanley Axelrod, "Treatment of the Negro in American History School Textbooks," Negro History Bulletin, XXIX (March-April, 1966), p. 134.

textbook publishers to the special sensitivities of the Southern market."¹⁸

What this means, essentially, is that the Negro's role in history is eluded by the textbook writers and publishers, so that their texts will be more palatable to Southern sensitivities and prejudices. In the judgment of Raymond P. Alexander, it is certainly a pity that "America's largest racial minority must suffer the consequences of the textbook publishers' desire to appease the most backward section of white America."¹⁹

The failure of textbook publishers to present information on Negro history is reflected in the following statement by James Nabrit, Jr., President of Howard University:

We picture the Negro is an unfavorable role or we omit any reference to him A significant effect of these omissions in textbooks is the reinforcement of negative conceptions of what it means to be black.²⁰

Secondary school social studies textbooks were subjected to rigorous scrutiny to detect minority group bias in a study by the American Council for Education in 1949. The report's

¹⁸ Raymond Pace Alexander, "Study of the Negro Blasts Racial Myths," Negro History Bulletin, XXVIII (Oct., 1964) 3.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ James Nabrit, Jr., "The Treatment of Minorities in Textbooks and Other Teaching Materials" (Washington, D.C.: NEA Professional Rights and Responsibilities Conference, 1967), p. 5. (Mimeoographed)

conclusions indicated that the traditional textbook treatment of the Negro contained misleading implications, distortions, and, most frequently, omissions.²¹

In 1960, another study for the purpose of measuring progress toward eliminating bias from textbooks found little improvement since the 1949 study. Among its conclusions was the assertion that historically, American Negroes were still portrayed as uneducated, bewildered freemen. The report noted that the main criticisms of the 1949 report, as they related to textbook treatment of the Negroes, were equally valid for the year 1960.²²

One of the most authoritative of the recent textbook studies regarding the treatment of the Negro was that of Irving Sloan in 1966. In his study, Sloan analyzed five junior high school and eight senior high school American history textbooks on the basis of their presentation of the Negro's role in American history. All thirteen of the texts included in the survey were judged to represent some inadequacies and "disappointments" in their presentation of Negro history, although some of the texts were ranked far above others in their treatment of Negro history.²³

²¹Sol M. Elkins, "Minorities in Textbooks: The Latest Chapter," Teachers College Record, LXVI (March, 1965), 505.

²²Ibid., p. 506.

²³Irving Sloan, The Negro in Modern American History Textbooks (Chicago: American Federation of Teachers, 1966), p. 6.

Of the thirteen American history textbooks included in Sloan's survey, eight were authorized for use in Kansas senior high schools by the Kansas State Textbook Screening Committee as of January, 1967.²⁴

III. THE NEGRO'S ROLE IN AMERICAN HISTORY FROM 1519 TO 1861

The Negro in Exploration and Settlement

There are numerous examples to show that Negroes had a place among the exploits of the European pioneers who explored North America. As Spanish, Portuguese, and French explorers moved into the interior of the continent, Negroes assisted in the undertakings.²⁵ Negroes were with Balboa, Ponce de Leon, Cortes, and Manenendez.²⁶ They also accompanied De Ayllon in 1526 in his expedition from the Florida peninsula northward, and accompanied Cabeza de Vaca through what is now the Southwestern part of the United States. They also were with Coronado in the conquest of New Mexico and Arizona.²⁷

²⁴ Textbooks Suitable for Use in Kansas Schools and Applicable Statutes, Regulations and Policies, 1967 (Topeka: State Printer, 1966), pp. 77-78.

²⁵ John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1957), p. 46.

²⁶ Lerone Bennett, Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America, 1619-1964 (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1964), p. 360.

²⁷ Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley, The Negro in our History (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1962), p. 60.

One of the most outstanding Negroes playing a part in early American exploration was Estevanico, who had been brought to the New World with the de Vaca expedition. Ordered to proceed ahead of the main exploration party, he was the first to see the land now known as New Mexico and Arizona, and subsequently to explore it.²⁸ Although he was killed by the Indians and unable to complete his exploration of the Southwest, he prepared the way for the conquest of the Southwest by the Spaniards.²⁹

Negroes followed with the French close upon the trail of such explorers as Cartier and Champlain. They appeared with the Jesuits in Canada and the Mississippi Valley during the seventeenth century. They later constituted a considerable element of the pioneers in Louisiana. In these regions the Negro assisted in the exploration of the country and contributed much to the establishment of legal claims by actual settlement.³⁰

There also were individual Negroes who made their contribution to American development as the frontier was pushed westward. One of these was Jean Babtiste Point du Sable, an immigrant from Haiti, who established the first permanent settlement at the site of present-day Chicago while fur trapping on the banks of the Chicago River. The trading post he established there in 1779

²⁸ Axelrod, op. cit., p. 135.

²⁹ Woodson and Wesley, loc. cit.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

later became the site of Chicago.³¹ James Beckwourth, a fugitive slave, discovered the pass through the Sierra Nevada mountains which now bears his name.³² This pass was used by many of the California settlers and gold-seekers.

The Negro in the American Revolution

Among the many protests made by American colonists against British policies prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution, the name of Crispus Attucks stands as a significant figure. A mulatto of imposing appearance whose "very looks were enough to terrify any person,"³³ he became the hero of the Boston Massacre. When the presence of British soldiers excited the indignation of the colonists, the decision was made by a group of patriots led by Attucks to attack them openly. He marched his men up King Street to protest by action, where the exchange of blows and rifle fire resulted in the death of Attucks and three white patriots.³⁴ His death earned for him the distinction of being "the first to defy and the first to die" in the struggle against the British Crown.³⁵ A monument was erected 118 years later

³¹William Katz, "Much Yet to Overcome," Saturday Review, XLIX (August 13, 1966), 27.

³²Donald C. Lord, "Who Ever Heard of a Negro Cowboy?," Kentucky School Journal, XLV (February, 1967), 19.

³³Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the American Revolution (Chapel Hill, N. Car.: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 6.

³⁴Franklin, op. cit., p. 127.

³⁵"The Ten Most Dramatic Events in Negro History," Ebony 18, (September, 1963), 29.

in honor of Attucks and the other victims of the Boston massacre.³⁶

The literature indicates that the Negro played a significant role as a participant in the Revolutionary War. Although it is not possible to give accurate figures as to the number of Negroes who enlisted in the American armies, it has been estimated that five thousand Negro soldiers served in the patriot forces.³⁷ They served in every phase of the war, and under every possible condition. They were active on the battlefronts and behind the lines; as spies and as messengers; in the Continental army as well as in state armies. Many of them had participated in the wars against the French and the Indians, thus developing a tradition for military service that was alive when the Revolutionary War began. This was evidenced in the battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, in which Negroes took up arms against the mother country.³⁸

The early use of Negro troops in the war did not continue, however. A pattern of excluding them from military service developed in July of 1775, the most dominant reason for which was the fear that giving a gun to a slave was an open invitation to trouble.³⁹

³⁶Bennett, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁷Quarles, op. cit., p. 9.

³⁸J. Reuben Shuler, "The Negro on the Virginia Frontier," Journal of Negro History, XLIII (October, 1958), 284.

³⁹Quarles, op. cit., p. 13.

Some twenty months after the war between England and the former colonies had broken out, however, grim necessity forced the states to reconsider the decision to exclude Negroes from their armies. The dire need for additional troops compelled General Washington to issue an order in December, 1776, that all ⁴⁰ generals would be permitted to enlist Negroes in their armies. The hard winter at Valley Forge and the fact that Lord Dunmore of Virginia was enlisting Negroes in the Loyalist army made Washington's decision even more compelling.

The reluctance to enlist Negroes did not die at once, however. The Continental Congress, bound by the necessity of conciliating Southern views, still refused to sanction Negro enlistments. Thus, it was in the state armies that the first Negroes were enlisted. Early in 1777 Massachusetts included Negroes in the list of draft eligibles, and the Rhode Island Assembly voted to raise two battalions of slaves at its February, 1778 meeting.⁴¹ By the end of the war, Negro troops from all thirteen states had shouldered arms in defense of American liberty.

The significant role of the Negro in the Revolutionary War is borne out by the fact that Negro troops participated in nearly all the important battles of the war. Hardly a military action was without Negro participants. In addition to their fighting in such initial battles of the war as Ticonderoga,

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Bunker Hill, Lexington, and Concord, they also fought at Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, and Yorktown.⁴²

Among the Negroes who fought in the war were those who won recognition and a conspicuous place for themselves in the annals of those who performed heroic deeds. Peter Salem, a hero in the Battle of Bunker Hill, won the admiration of his comrades in arms when he shot down the British Major Pitcairn, which contributed to the victory the Patriots secured on June 17, 1775.⁴³ Another Negro, Salem Poor, distinguished himself for acts of bravery at Bunker Hill, and won the praise of all his superiors, one of whom said that he "behaved like an experienced officer, as well as an excellent soldier. In the person of this Negro centers a brave and gallant soldier."⁴⁴

Since Negro soldiers fought side by side with whites, there was no battle in which Negro troops were conspicuous as a racial group. Perhaps the Battle of Rhode Island, on August 12, 1778, comes the nearest to being an engagement in which Negroes were distinctive as a group, where they comprised a fraction of one of six brigades which made up General John Sullivan's forces.⁴⁵ This regiment, under the command of Col. Greene, distinguished itself for brilliant fighting, and a veteran soldier involved

⁴²Franklin, op. cit., p. 136.

⁴³Ibid., p. 130.

⁴⁴Bennett, op. cit., p. 58.

⁴⁵Quarles, op. cit., p. 80.

in this battle said of them that "had they been unfaithful or even given way before the enemy, all would have been lost."⁴⁶

Three times in succession they were attacked with desperate valor and fury by well-trained, disciplined troops, and three times they successfully repelled the assault, thus preserving the Patriot army from capture.⁴⁷

In addition to the Negro troops who distinguished themselves in the front lines of battle, a few performed strategic roles as spies and messengers. The best known of these Negro spies was James Armistad, a Virginia slave who helped trap Cornwallis.⁴⁸ Operating in the area of Portsmouth, a region for which he needed no road map, he was commanded by General Lafayette to go into Cornwallis' camp and learn his strength and battle strategy. Armistad was so successful that Gen. Cornwallis asked him to spy on Lafayette. The Negro spy shuttled between the British and American camps, carrying false information to the Cornwallis camp and bona fide information to Lafayette.⁴⁹

Pompey, another Negro spy, was largely responsible for Anthony Wayne's capture of the fort at Stony Point, New York, in 1779. Making the British think that he was ignorant, he

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁷ Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 126.

⁴⁸ Quarles, op. cit., p. 94.

⁴⁹ Bennett, op. cit., p. 59.

obtained the British battle plans, which helped a detachment of American troops overpower the British.⁵⁰

Saul Matthews was a Negro spy operating in the region of Portsmouth, Virginia, during the Cornwallis occupation.

Matthews' superior, Colonel Josiah Parker, had been ordered by Lafayette and von Steuben to uncover intelligence about the British troops at Portsmouth and their movements up and down the James River. Parker sent Matthews into the British lines several times in search of vital information, and he appears not to have returned empty-handed. In 1792, nearly ten years after the formal close of the war, he petitioned for his freedom. The legislature granted his request, basing its action on his "many very essential services rendered to the commonwealth, during the late war."⁵¹

There were other Negroes, who although not enlisted as soldiers or employed as spies, were of great service to the American land forces. There were thousands whose brawn and skill as laborers contributed to the shaping of the military operations in many instances.⁵²

In addition to the many services rendered by Negroes to the American land forces, there were those who served at sea. Although no composite estimate of their numbers was available,

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Quarles, op. cit., p. 95.

⁵²Ibid., p. 94.

service at sea offered more opportunities to them than army service, since there was less reluctance in all parts of the country to employ them aboard ship than to employ them as soldiers. As in the case of army recruitment, the use of Negroes in ships was inevitable due to manpower shortages. Under such circumstances, few navy officers were likely to draw the color line. Negro seamen and sailors served on ships of the Continental Navy, on those of the state navies, on those operated by the army, and on the hundreds of privateers commissioned by Congress.⁵³ Consequently, the use of Negro recruits on American ships was quite general.

It was in the state navies that the largest numbers of Negro seamen and sailors served. Massachusetts and Connecticut took all the Negroes they could get for maritime service. Among southern states, Virginia was most inclined to use Negro seamen, enlisting nearly one hundred fifty during the war. Generally, the highest function open to Southern Negro sailors was to serve as pilots in local waters, and several attained considerable reputation for their diligence and success.⁵⁴ Caesar Terrant piloted the Virginia vessel, "The Patriot" and was cited for his gallantry in action. Capt. Mark Starlin, the only Negro naval captain in Virginia's history, made daring raids on British vessels at Hampton Roads.⁵⁵

⁵³Ibid., p. 83.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 198.

⁵⁵Bennett, loc. cit.

Intellectual Contributions

Although Negroes had extremely few opportunities to receive even a rudimentary education during the Revolutionary period, a few noteworthy examples were found of Negroes who overcame the obstacles facing them, and thus made valuable contributions to the intellectual life of their times.

During this period, Phillis Wheatley became an internationally known poet.⁵⁶ In an age when few women even read books, she wrote a volume of poetry, titled Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral. It was the second book of verse published by any woman in America, and the first by a Negro.⁵⁷

Born in Africa in about 1753 and brought to America as a small girl, she had an opportunity to educate herself while working as a maid in Boston. She learned to read rapidly, and developed an appreciation for history, astronomy, geography, and Latin classics. She published her first poem in 1770, and published her book of verse three years later while in England, where she had been sent for her health after being manumitted.⁵⁸

Miss Wheatley attracted considerable attention among the prominent people of her day, who conceded that she decidedly demonstrated that Negroes had possibilities beyond that of their

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

⁵⁷ Benjamin Quarles, "What the Historian Owes the Negro," Saturday Review, XLIX (Sept. 3, 1966), 11.

⁵⁸ Franklin, op. cit., p. 155.

typical servile status.⁵⁹ Soon after her return from England, she received a letter from George Washington inviting her to Mt. Vernon.⁶⁰

The poetry of Phillis Wheatley is recognized more for its style than for its originality. It shows some mastery of the heroic couplet, which she imitated from the English poet she idolized, Alexander Pope.⁶¹ As was the case with much of the writing by American authors of her day, however, it suffered from the lack of originality. As stated by one critic of her day, "it contains too much Pope and not enough Wheatley."⁶² Despite this restriction however, Miss Wheatley's poetry must be evaluated in the context of the fact that she lived at a time when few, if any American writers had severed their ties with literary currents in Europe.

Another well-educated Negro of the Revolutionary period was Benjamin Banneker, whose varied academic and practical talents won considerable recognition for him in his day. He was a mathematician, astronomer, and writer, and assisted in laying out the streets in Washington, D.C.⁶³ Born in 1731, he attended a

⁵⁹Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 136.

⁶⁰"The Calendar of Negro History," Negro History Bulletin, XXX (February, 1967), 6.

⁶¹Logan, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶²Bennett, op. cit., p. 65.

⁶³Axelrod, op. cit., p. 136.

private school open to whites and Negroes near Baltimore, developing a keen interest in science and mathematics. While still a young man, he astounded his family and neighbors by constructing a clock from wooden materials, which may have been the first clock put together in America.⁶⁴ When he was lent books on mathematics and astronomy by a friend, he had mastered the material in the books within a few months, and even found several errors in the calculations of the authors.⁶⁵

Banneker became one of the most noted astronomers and mathematicians of his time.⁶⁶ In 1791, he began issuing his almanac, an undertaking which lasted until 1802. Among his readers was Thomas Jefferson, who warmly praised it and sent a copy of it to Cordorcer in France, to whom he wrote:

We have now in the United States a Negro, the son of a black man born in Africa and a black woman born in the United States, who is a very respectable mathematician. . . . I have seen very eloquent solutions of geometrical problems by him. Add to this that he is a very worthy and respectable member of society I shall be delighted to see these instances of moral eminence so multiplied as to prove that the want of talent observed in them, is merely the effect of their degraded condition, and not proceeding from any difference in the structure of the parts on which intellect depends.⁶⁷

Jefferson was so impressed with the worth of Banneker that he secured for him a place on the commission that surveyed and

⁶⁴ Bennett, op. cit., p. 368.

⁶⁵ Axelrod, loc. cit.

⁶⁶ Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 137.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 138.

laid out the streets of Washington, D.C. When Banneker arrived in the federal territory, the Georgetown Weekly Ledger described him as one "whose abilities as surveyor and astronomer already prove the assumption that that race of men is void of mental endowment is without foundation."⁶⁸

Negroes in the War of 1812

Negroes displayed a willingness to serve their country in both the land and sea battles of the War of 1812. Their numbers were less than in the Revolutionary War, however, for which two factors can be cited: First of all, the area of the country from which they would most likely have come, namely New England and the mid-Atlantic states, showed less enthusiasm for the war than did other areas of the country. Furthermore, there was little effort made to recruit Negroes.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the war record is not void of Negro deeds of valor. A large number of Negro sailors fought with Commodore Perry and Chancey in the battles on the Great Lakes and were particularly effective in the Battle of Lake Erie, in 1813.⁷⁰ Of the eighty-three men on Perry's ship who perished in that battle, three-fourths were Negroes. That these men were courageous and able fighters is demonstrated by their refusal

⁶⁸ Axelrod, op. cit., p. 157.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

⁷⁰ Bennett, op. cit., p. 366.

to abandon ship.⁷¹

Macdonough, another naval officer of the War of 1812, in writing about one of his naval engagements, said:

The name of one of my poor fellows who was killed ought to be registered in the book of fame, and remembered with reverence as long as bravery is considered a virtue. He was a black man by the name of Johnson. When America has such men, she has little to fear from the tyrants of the ocean.⁷²

Negroes also comprised a part of the land forces, particularly General Andrew Jackson at New Orleans. Two battalions were with him when he defeated the British in that famous battle. The following words, spoken to his Negro troops, express his indebtedness to them.:

Soldiers! the President of the United States shall be informed of your conduct on the present occasion; and the voice of the Representatives of the American nation shall applaud your valor, as your general now praises your ardor.⁷³

Negro Participation in the Abolition Movement

Events during the decades prior to the Civil War leave no doubt that Negroes were very active in the Abolition Movement. They were at the base of the abolitionist crusade, and their numbers continually increased among abolitionist ranks.⁷⁴ They were active, along with other Americans, as organizers, supporters, and participants, both on national and local levels

⁷¹Wesley, op. cit., p. 92.

⁷²Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 200.

⁷³Ibid., p. 201.

⁷⁴Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860 (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 22.

where anti-slavery organization was being undertaken.

Although William Lloyd Garrison is credited with founding the Abolition Movement in 1831, with the publication of The Liberator,⁷⁵ several significant developments show that Negroes became active in the abolitionist cause even before that time. The first Negro newspaper, Freedom's Journal, was commenced in 1827 by Samuel E. Cornish, a Presbyterian minister, and John B. Russwurm, the first Negro college graduate in the United States, having been graduated from Bowdoin College in 1826.⁷⁶ The year 1829 witnessed a further flowering of the Negro press as new writings denouncing slavery appeared. In that year, David Walker, the "John the Baptist" of the antislavery crusade, wrote his Appeal in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States. It expressed a bitter view of the wrongs that Negroes had suffered, and it called plainly for violence and revolt.⁷⁷ So radical was Walker's Appeal that it caused even some of the most radical abolitionists to oppose him. At one time the state of Georgia offered \$10,000

⁷⁵Richard O. Curry, The Abolitionists, Reformers or Fanatics? (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1965), p. 10.

⁷⁶Bennett, op. cit., p. 131.

⁷⁷Filler, op. cit., p. 161.

for him if taken alive, because of the Appeal.⁷⁸

Another significant accomplishment of the Pioneer Negro abolitionists was the Negro Convention Movement, begun in 1830. In reply to the suggestion that the Negroes emigrate under the protection of the American Colonization Society, a few bold thinkers like Peter Williams, Thomas Jennings, and Richard Allen proposed a convention of the leaders of the Negroes in the United States. A preliminary meeting was held in Philadelphia in September, 1830, with delegates present from seven states.⁷⁹ The first convention met the following June, and thereafter nearly every year until the Civil War began. The Convention continuously took a strong position against colonization and slavery, and undertook various activities in support of the Abolition Movement. Messages calling for the abolition of slavery and the improvement of the free people of color were sent annually to the state legislatures and to Congress.⁸⁰

With the commencement of white participation in the Abolition Movement, the Negro began to cooperate with white efforts in order to strengthen the movement. Even before the first issue of Garrison's The Liberator appeared, he was assured of the wholehearted support of Negroes in his endeavor. He appealed to them for their support in an announcement of his

⁷⁸Edward Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 496.

⁷⁹Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 272.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 273.

intention to publish a paper on their behalf, and was soon gratified by their response. Of the four hundred fifty subscribers of The Liberator during its first year of publication, four hundred were Negroes. The support of Negroes was also seen in their contributions to the columns of The Liberator, and as agents for its sale and distribution, especially in Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston.⁸¹ The conclusion seems well grounded that without the support offered by Negroes, The Liberator would have been far less influential as an organ of abolitionist sentiment.

Another important step in the Abolition Movement as it gained strength was the organization of abolitionist societies. The first of these was the New England Anti-Slavery Society, organized in 1832 in the African Baptist Church in the Negro section of Boston. It was estimated that approximately one-fourth of those in attendance were Negroes.⁸² This organization was supported by Negroes throughout its existence, and Frederick Douglass, a prominent Negro abolitionist, was elected President in 1847.⁸³

An even more influential abolitionist organization in which Negroes participated was the American Anti-Slavery Society, the first nationwide organization of its kind. It was organized in

⁸¹Wesley, op. cit., p. 78.

⁸²Ibid., p. 79.

⁸³Franklin, op. cit., p. 248.

Philadelphia in 1833, at the home of a Negro, Frederick Hinton.⁸⁴ The delegates who drew up the society's Declaration of intentions included three Negro signatories, and four Negroes served on the first Board of Managers. At most of the annual meetings there were Negro delegates who participated in the proceedings.⁸⁵

In the latter 1830's and throughout the 1840's, the pioneers of Negro Abolition began to give way to some of the "giants" of the movement, as names such as Charles Lennox Remond, Samuel Ringgold Ward, Henry Highland Garnet, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass emerged to become well-known among abolitionists ranks.⁸⁶

One reason for this rise to prominence by so many Negro abolitionists was that white abolitionists soon realized that the Negro pleading his own cause could wield effective blows against slavery. The first Negro to be called to this service was Charles Lennox Remond, probably the ablest representative of the Negro race until the rise of Frederick Douglass. He began his career as an abolitionist in 1828, and soon became a well-known orator at abolitionist meetings. He shot to fame after a triumphal speaking tour in England and Ireland, and contributed as a writer to newspapers and magazines. Of his writing it

⁸⁴Wesley, op. cit., p. 81.

⁸⁵Franklin, loc. cit.

⁸⁶Bennett, op. cit., pp. 137-138.

was said that "no man could put more meaning into fewer words."⁸⁸

Samuel Ringgold Ward, who became a professional abolitionist in 1839, shared with Frederick Douglass the unusual honor of being one of the most popular orators of his day. For several years he served a white congregation at South Butler, New York.⁸⁹ Unlike Remond, who was allied with the more passive Garrisonians, Ward advocated a militant, political brand of abolitionism.⁹⁰ Best known for his speaking ability, he was advertised by abolitionists as "The Black Daniel Webster." His lecturing tours took him to nearly every church, hall, or schoolhouse in Western and Central New York, as well as to other parts of the North and abroad in Jamaica and England.

Another dynamic Negro abolitionist was Henry Highland Garnet, whose family fled from Maryland to New York, where he received an education and became a Presbyterian minister. He became a popular preacher and lecturer, coming into his own as a leader of the Abolition Movement in 1843 when he delivered a slashing attack on slavery at the American Anti-Slavery Convention at Buffalo, New York. Recognized widely thereafter as a man of influence on the platform, he became one of the many Negroes to carry the antislavery banner across the sea to Europe, going to England in 1850. After his return, he continued to serve as

⁸⁸Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 315.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Bennett, op. cit., p. 141.

a Presbyterian minister in New York and Washington, D. C., and at one time was chosen as president of Avery College.⁹¹

Serving the Abolitionist cause both as lecturer and writer was William Wells Brown. As lecturer he served the American Antislavery Society from 1843 to 1849, after which he toured England and France. He was the embodiment not only of what the slave was, since he was an emancipated slave himself, but his intelligence also represented an example of what the slave might become.⁹² After lecturing at home and abroad, he took up the pen and was a regular contributor to abolitionist publications. His historical writings about slave labor in the South and later, about the role of Negroes in the Civil War earned for him the distinction of becoming one of the first Negro historians.⁹³

Outstanding among all the Negro abolitionists was Frederick Douglass, a fugitive slave who had fled from Maryland to New York in 1838. He was introduced to the antislavery movement in 1841 when he attended an anti-slavery convention in Nantucket, Massachusetts, and spoke of his experiences as a slave.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., 275.

⁹² Ibid., p. 316.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 266.

⁹⁴ Filler, loc. cit.

It soon became apparent that Douglass was an ideal orator for the abolitionist cause, and he became one of the best known orators in the United States.⁹⁵ From 1841 to 1845, he traveled as an antislavery agent under the direction of William Lloyd Garrison, after which he lectured in England and Ireland for two years.⁹⁶ One of his contemporaries remarked that "he was what fighters in the abolitionist movement have been praying for; one who had known slavery and was eloquent, impressive, energetic, and fearless."⁹⁷

Upon his return from England in 1847, Douglass launched his career as a writer and journalist by establishing his abolitionist paper, the North Star. This independent effort, as well as the articles he wrote for other journals and his autobiographies, made Douglass the most outstanding contributor to the literary efforts of Negroes during the generation prior to the Civil War.⁹⁸

Douglass was also active in the Underground Railroad, and in many other efforts to improve conditions which Negroes faced. Few anti-slavery leaders did so much to promote the cause of manumission of the slaves in the United States and Europe in the generation before the Civil War.⁹⁹

⁹⁵Franklin, op. cit., p. 249.

⁹⁶Frazier, op. cit., p. 499.

⁹⁷Axelrod, loc. cit.

⁹⁸Frazier, loc. cit.

⁹⁹Franklin, loc. cit.

Another outstanding Negro abolitionist was Sojourner Truth, who became an ardent lecturer for the cause of manumission in 1843. Her quaint speech and strong hatred of slavery made an indelible impression on her listeners. Although illiterate, she was a powerful speaker and had a quick, incisive mind which enabled her to grasp the essentials of the issues on which she spoke.¹⁰⁰

In addition to the Negroes who supported the abolitionist cause, there were many who gave direct aid to fugitive slaves and to those who wished to escape through the Underground Railroad.

Of those who assisted the escape of slaves, the name of Harriet Tubman stands out as a dramatic example of courage and dedication. She made nineteen trips into the South to rescue members of her family and others from bondage.¹⁰¹ She was credited for having rescued more than three hundred slaves from bondage in the South, and a reward of \$40,000 was at one time placed upon her head.¹⁰² For all the exploits which she performed in assisting other Negroes in their quest for freedom, she became known as the "Moses" of her people.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Bennett, op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁰¹Larry Gara, The Liberty Line, the Legend of the Underground Railroad (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), p. 85.

¹⁰²William Breyfogle, Make Free, the Story of the Underground Railroad (Lippincott: New York, 1958), p. 175.

¹⁰³Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 275.

There were many other Negroes who gave assistance to slaves or fugitives. Josiah Henson made numerous trips into the South to assist fugitive slaves in their escape. David Ruggles and William Still were in charge of the key Underground Railroad stations in New York City and Philadelphia, respectively. Other active "conductors" of the railroad included Lewis Hayden in Boston, Frederick Douglass in Rochester, N.Y., and J. W. Loguen and Samuel Ringgold Ward at Syracuse.¹⁰⁴ James G. Birney, a very active white abolitionist, said the Underground Railroad in his area was "almost uniformly managed by colored people."¹⁰⁵

Ante-Bellum Literary and Professional Contributions

Despite the difficulties which Negroes faced in overcoming the restrictions of the status forced upon them, there were notable examples of free Negroes and fugitives who, after receiving an education, made notable contributions in learned fields. There were two such Negroes who made outstanding contributions to the literary efforts of the Negro: Alexander Crummell and George M. Horton.¹⁰⁶

Crummell was a free Negro, born in New York City in 1819. After receiving some education in the United States, he went to England, where he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts

¹⁰⁴ Gara, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁰⁵ Bennett, op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁰⁶ Frazier, op. cit., p. 498.

from the University of Cambridge in 1853. There he received a liberal education in the classics and in theology.¹⁰⁷ Although a large portion of his literary work was written after the Civil War, he did deliver a eulogy on the life of Thomas Clarkson prior to his departure for England. It became an important part of the growing literary expression of the Negroes, and Crummell "made an impression" by delivering an address in England on the same subject while studying there.¹⁰⁸

George M. Horton was a poet during the ante-bellum period whose poems were widely read. In 1829 he published a volume entitled The Hope of Freedom, and for the next thirty years wrote for students at the University of North Carolina and for various newspapers.

The contributions of learned Negroes during the ante-bellum period were equally as evident in various professions.

Lemuel Haynes became a well-known minister in Massachusetts just after the turn of the century. Reared and educated in a Puritan background, religion became an important aspect of his experience. He was often called upon on Saturday evenings to read from collections of sermons to prepare his master's family for the Sabbath. One Saturday evening he substituted the sermon with one of his own. As it had a new ring and a thought that

¹⁰⁷Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 274.

¹⁰⁸Franklin, op. cit., p. 229.

his master had never heard, the master inquired as to whose sermon it was. Haynes confessed that it was his own, and was soon given an opportunity to exercise his gift. During his preaching ministry he served several white parishes in New England and New York. He also served as a missionary in destitute sections of New England, and showed unusual ability in engaging in the theological discussions of his day.¹⁰⁹

Another Negro who gained distinction in the ministry was J.W.C. Pennington. He was born a slave in Maryland, and had no opportunity for early education. But after his release from bondage, he so applied himself to the study of languages, history, literature, and theology that he became a proficient teacher in the Presbyterian Church. He later won distinction for himself as a pastor in Hartford, Connecticut. He made several trips to Europe to attend conferences in London, Paris, and Brussels. On these occasions, he was invited to preach and speak before some of the most refined and aristocratic audiences in Europe. In recognition of his scholarship, the University of Heidelberg conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.¹¹⁰

In education, there were several Negro educators who earned professorships at a white college. Charles L. Reason, George

¹⁰⁹ Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., pp. 157-158.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 276-277.

Vashon, and William Allen each held a professorship for a time at New York Central College at McGrawville, New York. Reason, a veteran teacher in New York City, was so well educated that in 1844 he was called to the full professorship of Belles-Lettres and the French Languate at Central.¹¹¹ Vashon, a graduate of Oberlin College, was admitted to the bar in 1847, but devoted his talents to education and became professor of the classics at Central College.¹¹²

Two Negro physicians are known to have gained distinction in the field of medicine. One was James Derham, who was born in Philadelphia in 1762. After receiving a rudimentary education, he moved to New Orleans where he eventually became so adept that he built up a business paying him \$3,000 a year. Of him a contemporary, Dr. Benjamin Rush, said:

I have conversed with him upon most of the acute and epidemic diseases of the country where he lives, and was pleased to find him perfectly acquainted with the modern mode of practice on these diseases. I expected to have suggested some new medicines to him, but he suggested many more to me.¹¹³

Another doctor attaining prominence was Dr. James McCune Smith, who for years practiced in New York City. He was a distinguished graduate in medicine from the University of Glasgow. He was well informed in other fields as well. As a writer, he

¹¹¹ Carter G. Woodson, The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861 (New York: Putnam, 1915), p. 280.

¹¹² Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 274.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 142.

was easily drawn into the discussion of slavery. His knowledge of history, science, and literature enabled him to treat the question in a scholarly way.¹¹⁴

Participation in Political Parties

Although the participation of Negroes in political parties was quite limited during the ante-bellum period, their participation in politics did commence before their enfranchisement by the Fifteenth Amendment and the inducement from Radical Republicans to utilize that right. That the Negroes' political role in the ante-bellum period was restricted, however, was to be expected since a large majority of the states excluded Negroes from voting by statute. Such laws were passed in twenty-three states from 1792 to 1859.¹¹⁵ It was only in the five New England states that Negroes could exercise the suffrage in 1850.¹¹⁶ For those Negroes who did exercise the right to vote in the few states which permitted them to do so, political activity was regarded as another method of accomplishing the abolitionist cause.

Of the political parties which attracted the attention and support of Negroes, manumission of the slaves was a major plank in the party platform. Throughout the ante-bellum period, this limited their participation to minor parties, since the major parties sidestepped the issue of slavery.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 266.

¹¹⁵ Wesley, op. cit., p. 57.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 58.

The first such party which Negroes supported was the Liberty Party, organized in Albany, New York, in 1840.¹¹⁷ Several Negro abolitionists joined the ranks of the party in the year of its formation, including Samuel Ringgold Ward, Henry Highland Garnet, and William Wells Brown. It never became a strong political force, however, for which reason some Negro leaders never did affix their allegiance to it.¹¹⁸

In 1848, a new political party came into existence, the Free Soil Party, well known for its shibboleth of "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor, and Free Men." Some of the same Negro abolitionists were active members of the party from its inception. Due largely to its greater strength, this party was supported by a larger Negro vote.

In the election of 1848, the first test of the party's strength, Free Soilers were strongest in Massachusetts, where Negroes voted for the party almost to the man.. In some towns across the state, there were enough Negro votes to hold the balance of power. In Rhode Island, however, the Negroes voted primarily for the Whig Party since that party had won their support in preserving Negro suffrage.¹¹⁹

The Free Soil Party became more attractive to Negroes when, in 1852, a party convention adopted a resolution that the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 60.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 68.

franchise should be extended to all men without any distinction of color. Not many months afterward, Frederick Douglass joined the ranks of the party, after having supported the Liberty Party to that time. He attended the national convention of the party that same year, at which he was elected secretary by acclamation.¹²⁰

With the entry of the Republican Party into the political arena, the allegiance of Negro voters became somewhat more uncertain. It seems unlikely that many Negroes from the Free Soil Party would have rallied behind the newer party as did many whites, because it did not advocate manumission of the slaves. It seems highly improbable that Negroes would have taken an interest in a party which resolved to interfere only with the extension of slavery in the territories.¹²¹

Negroes did not participate in political parties in large numbers during the ante-bellum period. However, their support did help such parties as the Liberty Party and the Free Soilers to keep the issues of abolition and Negro suffrage constantly before the voters of many Northern states.

Negro Inventors

Considerable restrictions were placed upon any Negroes who attempted to learn a trade, since a trained Negro would have been a threat to the white man's economic security. They were

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 76.

excluded from some trades by unions, and it was extremely difficult for them to receive apprenticeship training. On one occasion, the president of a Cincinnati mechanics' association was tried for the crime of helping a Negro youth to learn a trade.¹²²

Despite these severe restrictions, there were occasional examples of Negroes whose inventive skill led to important inventions. Slaves as such could not be granted a patent, according to an opinion of Jeremiah S. Black, attorney-general of the United States in 1858, since they could not contract with the government. There were occasional examples of free Negroes applying for and receiving patents, however.¹²³

A Negro slave from Georgia may have been partially responsible for the invention of the cotton gin, since he had been experimenting with techniques of separating cotton seeds and fibres which Whitney observed and applied to his invention. Jo Anderson, another slave, was a trusted helper of Cyrus McCormick while he was developing his reaping machine in Rockbridge, Virginia, in the 1830's.¹²⁴

Henry Blair, a free Negro, was probably the first member of his race to receive a patent for an invention. He took out a patent on a corn harvester in 1834, and patented a second corn harvester in 1836.¹²⁵ Equally inventive was Norbert

¹²²Bennett, op. cit., p. 153.

¹²³Woodson and Wesley, op. cit., p. 230.

¹²⁴Bennett, op. cit., p. 368.

¹²⁵Ibid.

Rillieux, a New Orleans machinist and engineer, who patented an evaporating pan which revolutionized the refining of sugar. At much the same time, James Forten, a free Negro of Philadelphia, made a fortune out of a device he perfected for handling sails.¹²⁶

Benjamin Montgomery, a slave owned by Jefferson Davis, invented a boat propeller near the end of the slave period. When denied a patent on the grounds of his slave status, Davis, as President of the Confederate States, secured the enactment of a law providing for the issue of patents to slaves.¹²⁷

In addition to the inventions cited above, which are known to have been the work of Negroes, there is evidence to show that some of the inventions brought out by white persons in the South during the ante-bellum period were devices actually invented by Negroes.¹²⁸

IV. CONCLUSION

It was concluded that both the review of the literature and the facts presented in the study gave some measure of certainty that the neglect of Negro history is a problem of such magnitude that it must be brought to the attention of educators.

¹²⁶ Woodson and Wesley, loc. cit.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

From the review of the literature it was concluded that a new historiographical trend is emerging among historians, as Negro achievements in American history have received more attention than previously. It was discovered, however, that a lag appeared to exist between the emerging emphasis of historians and the materials used in the teaching of American history at the high school level.

It was not within the scope of this study to determine the extent to which the subject of Negro history has been ignored in teaching materials used on the high school level. Nevertheless, the review of the literature cited numerous textbook studies which revealed a considerable neglect of Negro history in the texts chosen for analysis. Consequently, the lag between the writing of Negro history and the teaching of Negro history was apparent.

Thus, the justification for undertaking the study of the Negro's role in American history as an educational problem was readily discernible. Only by making educators aware of the lag stated above, and the possible consequences of neglecting Negro history, could any alleviation of the problem be hoped for. Furthermore, it was concluded that a serious and openminded study of the facts pertaining to Negro history was necessary in order that a sufficient understanding of the problem might be gained.

It was for this purpose that the facts concerning the role of the Negro in American history from 1519 to 1861 were pre-

sented in the study. These facts clearly indicate that the Negro played a significant role as a group, particularly in the American Revolution and the Abolition Movement, and as individuals, as evidenced by the activities of such Negroes as Benjamin Banneker, Phillis Wheatley, and Crispus Attucks. It was also concluded that such facts cannot be denied if American history is to be taught objectively. Such objectivity would be necessary not only because of the educator's obligation to represent the facts accurately, but also because it might well contribute to attitudinal changes within the student, thus helping to build a more fully integrated society.

As the total subject of Negro participation in American history was found to be considerably broader than the scope of the report itself, further study of the subject might prove to be fruitful. One possibility would be to analyze American history textbooks to determine their presentation of the subject. Another possibility would be to extend the study chronologically into the period since 1861.

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THE ROLE OF THE NEGRO
IN AMERICAN HISTORY FROM 1519 TO 1861

by

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B. A., Bethel College, 1962

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1968

The purpose of the study was to establish a factual basis for the conclusion that the American Negro has made a worthy contribution to American history. The period from 1519, at which time the first Negro involvement in North American exploration occurred, until the commencement of the War Between the States was the focal point of the study.

The procedures of the study involved the selection of several annotated bibliographies prepared on the subject of the Negro in American history. From these a list of the most highly recommended works pertaining to the study was prepared. Both general surveys and more specialized works presenting a specific phase of the topic were consulted.

The facts amassed in the report indicated that the American Negro played a significant role in the development of the United States in a variety of ways during the period under study. This role was perhaps most apparent in the American Revolutionary War and the Abolition Movement. Other aspects of Negro contributions during the period under study included playing a part in North American exploration, making certain literary and professional accomplishments, participating in the War of 1812, supporting certain political parties, and contributing to economic development through the inventive process.

A most significant finding of the study was the apparent lag which appeared to have been in existence between the

emerging historiographical emphasis underlying the facts presented in the study, and the materials used in teaching American history at the high school level. Although it was not within the scope of the study to determine the extent to which Negro history might have been ignored, the review of the literature cited several textbook studies which indicated a considerable neglect of the subject in the texts chosen for analysis.

In view of the reported role of the American Negro in American history, and the apparent failure of many teaching materials to present the subject objectively, it was concluded that the problem was of sufficient magnitude that it should not escape the attention of any educators whose teaching might affect the attitudes of their students towards minority groups.